

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this report is to provide information that can be used by towns as they consider alternatives for financing their solid waste program. As solid waste costs have continued to rise through this decade, municipalities have increasingly explored Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program options; between 1995 and 1997, 13 new towns in Maine adopted a PAYT program. With this system, residents buy either bags, tags or stickers for their trash, typically costing between \$.30 and \$2.00. A few towns use weight-based programs where residents are charged by the pound. In almost all programs, recycling is free. As a result, people only pay for what they throw out, and are provided with incentives for reducing generation and increasing recycling.

After compiling the survey results from the State Planning Office's 1997 Annual Municipal Solid Waste Reports, we discovered that there are 65 Maine municipalities with PAYT programs in their community. In an effort to gain a better understanding of how these programs are working in Maine, the State Planning Office recently conducted a survey of Maine's PAYT programs. This report summarizes and analyzes the information provided by this survey. The survey was modeled after one conducted the New Hampshire Governors Recycling Program. By drawing on the experiences of other towns, municipal officials will have the information they need to make informed decisions.

For additional information about our program, please contact:

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SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was sent out to 50 towns and regions (totaling 65 municipalities), all of which reported that they have a PAYT program in place. 33 municipal officials representing 46 towns responded to the survey. This survey examined:

- program administration
- type of PAYT program
- distribution of bags
- solid waste budget issues
- potential problems

In the final section, a list of comments, observations, and suggestions has also been compiled. Included in these comments are individual thoughts on what impact the program has had on waste generation and recycling rates.

Program Administration:

Almost all of the programs are administered by the municipality or region affected. A few are operated by both the municipality and private haulers. However, none are operated exclusively by a private hauler. This result makes sense -- in order for a PAYT system to be effective, there needs to be the support and involvement of municipal officials.

On the other hand, towns relied on both dropoff and curbside collection systems. Over 41 towns use dropoff collection systems for their trash and/or recyclables, while 30 offer curbside services for trash or both trash and recyclables. A number of towns offer both dropoff and curbside collection. The results seem to indicate that curbside collection is not necessary for implementing a PAYT program. However, in most towns, the collection system, whether curbside or dropoff, was the same for both trash and recyclables. Only five towns provided dropoff recycling with curbside trash collection.

Program Type:

With the exception of a few towns, all of the programs surveyed use some form of bag system at a cost of between \$.30 to \$2.00 per bag of trash. This system can include providing bags, tags or stickers to residents. Only two towns use a weight-based system (i.e. charges per pound) -- typically, a weight-based system is more difficult to administer. Within the bag system, many towns have an upper limit on the weight allowable in each bag. In addition, a number of towns offer different size bags to meet the needs of customers who may not need, for example, a thirty gallon bag. Falmouth offers a 20 gallon bag for \$.64 and a 64 gallon bag for \$.91. Many of the programs are right around \$1.00 for a 30 gallon bag.

Durham has a system that seems to work very well for its residents. Each household is provided with 26 free bags; after residents have used their first 26 bags, they are charged \$3.00 for each bag. In this

case, the primary goal of the program is to reduce generation and associated disposal fees, and increase recycling. In contrast, an important goal of other PAYT programs is to cover part of the solid waste budget with revenues from bag sales.

Bag distribution:

The majority of programs distribute bags, tags or stickers through their town office and/or retail stores. Some also distribute them (or charge at the point of dropoff) through their transfer station. Using the transfer system as a bag distribution and collection system seems to work well for many of the solid waste programs with dropoff systems.

Solid Waste Budget Issues :

Many of the towns did not specify which portion of their solid waste budget bag sales were intended to cover -- typically, revenues covered both collection and disposal, or were identified as being to applied to the entire solid waste budget (collection and disposal were not differentiated). A few noted that revenues were intended to specifically cover either collection or disposal. Two towns noted that revenues were designed to cover a designated portion of the entire solid waste budget (i.e. 50% or 75% of the budget).

Problems:

Illegal dumping: Because each individual is directly paying for their trash, there is some incentive for residents to illegally dump their trash. Ten towns noted that they encountered some level of problems with illegal dumping. According to the Margaret Chase Smith Institute study from 1995, illegal dumping is common for the first six months or so. After this, residents adjust to the system and illegal dumping lessens. It is noteworthy that over 30 towns reported that there was no illegal dumping problem in their municipality. As one municipal official noted, household garbage is too easy to identify; however, bulky waste dumping (tires, furniture, etc.) continues to be a problem.

Overweight bags: With most PAYT programs, there is a limit to how much trash can be put into one bag. However, residents may attempt to overfill the bag to save money. When asked whether there is a problem with overweight bags, only three towns reported a problem.

Backyard burn: One of the major concerns from an air quality perspective is the impact of PAYT programs on the number of residents burning their trash in back yard burn barrels. While the legal use of back yard burn is limited to paper products and requires a permit (where local ordinance allow this activity), enforcement can be difficult.

Two towns reported a current problem with backyard burn barrels; one reported a short-term problem which has since disappeared. However, five towns reported that they either no longer permit backyard burn barrels or closely monitor its use.

We also asked towns about the impact of their PAYT program on local recycling rates and waste generation. In addition, towns were asked to include any advice or final thoughts they might have about their program. The responses are listed below.

Impact on recycling:

- Recycling increased/waste decreased (Belfast)
- Seems to keep town cleaner (Van Buren)
- Improves participation (Mars Hill)
- Has increased recycling some (Leeds)
- Public cares about environment through wallets (Dresden)
- Trash volume down 50%/ recycling way up (Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District))
- More recycling/more open burning also (Charleston/Bradford/Corinth)
- Has increased recycling -- SRRA (Sandy River Recycling) also has a incentive system for increasing recycling (New Vineyard)
- Has increased because recycling is free (Troy)
- Has encouraged recycling but allowed residents to choose (Monsoon)
- Lowered waste tonnage/more recyclable items (Bucksport)
- Reduced household trash by 50% (Holder)
- Increases recycling (Durham)
- Pay-per-bag & mandatory recycling go hand in hand. (Topsham)
- Total waste volume down 60% (Calais)
- Recycling rate increased (Unity)
- Slight increase in recycling -- decrease in waste (Windsor)
- Increased recycling by 50% -- reduced waste by 35% (Falmouth)
- Increases rates (Sidney)
- It's the driving force behind our successful recycling program (Bowdoinham)
- Over all amounts of household garbage tonnage have been stable and recycling has increased (Warren)
- Increased recycling and decreased solid waste -- some residents have gone to private haulers (Searsmont)
- People watch what they put their trash bags. (Howland)
- Pownal used to recycle at 10% or lower. Since Pay-As-You-Throw, we are recycling about 14% of the waste stream, usually placing third highest among RWS towns. (Pownal)
- Started off in the low 40's (rec. rate); however, we dropped to around 38% as the sticker shock wore off. (Tri-County Solid Waste)

Advice to other towns:

- Program working well for this town. (Linneus)
- Its the only way to go. (Mars Hill)
- Bite the bullet & go for it -- need at least one year prior education. (Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District)
- Be firm but flexible -- whining will go away after a 1 year. (Central Penobscot Solid Waste)
- Program should be justified on grounds of fairness. (New Vineyard)
- Residents resist at first but eventually accept; should consider alternatives for elderly /low-income residents -- we waive fees on an individual basis. (Monsoon)
- Go for it -- don't give it a second thought -- everyone loves it. (Fryeburg)
- Do it! (Ellsworth)
- Give advance warning & education -- taxpayers voted for the program. (Topsham)
- Our program has been very successful. (Calais)
- Go for it! -- Unity has covered costs plus. (Unity)
- Do it! (Windsor)
- Decided to do it based on fairness issues. (Sidney)
- Recycling program must accept a large enough portion of the waste stream to make a PAYT program acceptable to the community. (Bowdoinham)
- Be sure you have a trustworthy attendant -- we had a problem with stickers being sold more than once. (Searsmont)
- Its not perfect but it works for us. (Warren)
- Our program has changed the minds of a lot people that did not want to recycle or use the PAYT program. We have had a very successful program. (Howland)
- Educate populace very well, over several meetings where people can come and ask questions. Emphasize the equitable cost of disposal with this program. (Pownal)
- Education/information/communication -- you can't tell people enough times. (Central Penobscot Solid Waste)
- Do not use tags. Use bags! (Tri-County Solid Waste)

Maine Municipalities with Pay-As-You-Throw Programs:
Based on 1997 Municipal Solid Waste Reports

Addison	Marshfield
Appleton	Mercer
Arundel	Monson
Beals	New Vineyard
Belfast	Orland
Bowdoinham	Palermo
Bradford	Pownal
Bucksport	Searsmont
Calais	Searsport
Centerville	Sidney
Charleston	Somerville
Chatham	Sorrento
Columbia	Starks
Columbia Falls	Sullivan
Corinth	Thorndike
Dixmont	Topsham
Dresden	Troy
Durham	Union
Ellsworth	Unity
Falmouth	Van Buren
Franklin	Warren
Freedom	Washington
Fryeburg	Wellington
Garland	Wells
Hancock	Windsor
Harmony	Winter Harbor
Holden	
Howland	
Hudson	
Islesboro	
Jackman	
Jonesboro	
Jonesport	
Knox	
Leeds	
Liberty	
Linneus	
Litchfield	
Mars Hill	

Total number of PAYT programs: 65
(Up from 52 in 1995)

